Child Welfare Local Assessment Process:
Assessment Instructions and Tool

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LOCAL ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The "Child Welfare Local Assessment" is a process supporting the comprehensive analysis of local child welfare program operations and outcomes between county child welfare agencies and key partners within the local delivery system. The assessment contains specific questions focusing on responsibilities and results associated with the following outcome areas:
  ➢ Child and Community Safety;
  ➢ Out of-Home Care;
  ➢ Child Permanency, and;
  ➢ Child and Family Well-Being.

The assessment process is flexible and designed to use outcome data as the basis for analysis and to include broad participation of suggested community stakeholders. Pertinent data is presented in the Child Welfare Local Assessment Process: Child Welfare Data Profiles produced by the DCFS. Electronic data, using EXCEL Tables, will be made available as requested by the *Data Contact Person* identified by the county.

In order to support local implementation of the assessment process and to ensure ongoing coordination of the assessment process, the following activities and timeframes have been established:

Participate in Regional Roundtables-	March 19-March29, 2001
Submit Local Assessment Cover Sheet (See Page 9)-	April 6, 2001
Submit Final Response to Assessment Tool (See Pages 10-41)-	June 29, 2001

An electronic copy of the Child Welfare Local Assessment Process: Assessment Instructions and Tool is available at the Department's website, www.dhfs.state.wi.us/partners.htm under the DCFS Numbered Memo for the assessment process. As part of the submission of the final response to the assessment tool, the DCFS requires a written and an electronic copy of the completed assessment tool. Attachments are to be sent with the written copy only. Written materials are to be sent to DHFS/DCFS/OPEP, Attn: Michelle Rawlings, 1 West Wilson Street, Room 558, Madison, WI 53708. The electronic version of the completed assessment tool may be sent to rawlimm@dhfs.state.wi.us.

The local assessment process begins the implementation of a continuous improvement approach by local child welfare programs with the Division Children and Family Services (DCFS) to assure the quality of services and improve outcome achievement at both the local and state level. DCFS will summarize the results of the assessment from each county, produce an in-depth report that will be shared with counties and will continue to make outcome data available on an annual basis.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS INSTRUCTIONS

The local assessment process includes two major components. The first component of the assessment is an agency overview to obtain information regarding local program operations and service outcomes with key players to the county's child welfare delivery system. The second component of the assessment establishes a process for discussions with community stakeholders to talk about factors affecting the local child welfare outcomes. These community discussions are designed to promote greater community participation and responsibility in the delivery of child welfare services. Responses to the agency overview will be used to develop a comprehensive summary of child welfare program operations across the state and promote state and local program planning, statutory, legislative and performance priorities.

As part of the assessment, the DCFS has provided counties with a set of individual county data profiles. Data presented in these profiles include significant demographic information and use child abuse and neglect and out-of-home care data submitted by counties to the DCFS. These data profiles cover multiple years to observe fluctuations and serve as a foundation to the assessment process by providing specific data for each county on a variety of program outcomes, allowing for cross-county and state-level data for comparisons. Such comparisons will support a county's ability to analyze its outcome data and to identify potential factors that may contribute to variations. As with all data and data systems, some discrepancies within and across county and state level data will arise due to delays in data entry, differing points in time in which data is gathered and presented over time, etc.

To begin the assessment process, each county will establish a leadership group to provide local direction for the process. At a minimum, the leadership group should include the county human/social services director, a children's or juvenile court judge or court commissioner, a district attorney or corporation counsel who handles child welfare cases, or their designees. The leadership team can also include other key individuals, such as county board members, chief law enforcement officers and school superintendents, who can provide leadership to the local assessment process.

The leadership team will determine the format for the community discussions, recruit stakeholders to participate in the discussions and set parameters for the discussions. The leadership team will determine who will respond to the agency overview portion of the assessment process, including the targeted program questions. The leadership team is also responsible for approving the final written assessment response for submission to the DCFS.

County child welfare agency staff play a critical role in the assessment process by completing the agency overview, reviewing and supplementing the data profiles, preparing and facilitating the discussion groups, and completing the outcomes portion of the assessment tool. While the assessment process will create significant demands on staff time, the active and willing participation by staff is crucial to the success of the assessment process. The long-term benefits of greater community engagement in the child welfare program and improved understanding of program outcomes for local planning purposes will make the effort worthwhile. The assessment process also provides an ideal opportunity for child welfare staff to raise issues of local interest with the stakeholder groups.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA):
Enacted by the federal government on November 13, 1997, ASFA puts forward expectation to support the child safety, permanency and well-being of children in out-of-home care and mandates the establishment of outcomes to measure and evaluate state performance associated with child safety, permanence and well-being.

Case Plan: A specific, written, detailed strategy designed to help the child, youth, and his or her family to address those areas identified to be of concern. A case plan includes the outcomes to address the areas of concern and the services and service providers selected to achieve the identified goals to achieve the outcomes.

Case Evaluation:
A continuous component of the ongoing services to measure observable results against stated goals, gauge the level of risk reduction to children in the family and to the community's safety, and review and modify case plans in order to work toward prompt and successful case closure.

Chapter 48: Wisconsin statute, otherwise known as the Children's Code, which governs and authorizes agency jurisdiction in families where concerns regarding child maltreatment have been identified to be present and in the provision of voluntary placements of children.

Chapter 938:
Wisconsin statute, otherwise known as the Juvenile Justice Code, which governs and authorizes agency jurisdiction in families where concerns regarding juvenile behavior and its impact on the juvenile's or the community's protection have been identified to be present.

Child Maltreatment:
The physical, emotional, or sexual treatment of a child in such a manner that the child's emotional, cognitive, or physical development is or will be impaired, and the person(s) committing the maltreatment are unwilling or unable to behave differently. Chapter 48 defines abuse and neglect as follows:

Abuse means any of the following:
➢ Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means.
➢ Sexual intercourse or sexual contact under the Sexual Assault statute, Chapter 940.
➢ A violation against a child as specified in the Crimes against Children and Sexual Morality statutes, Chapters 948 and 944.
➢ Emotional damage for which the child's parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or to take steps to ameliorate the symptoms.

Neglect means failure, refusal or inability on the part of a parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person exercising temporary or permanent control over a child, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

Child Protective Services:
Specialized services, otherwise known as CPS, provided to families which control for the safety of maltreated children or children at risk of maltreatment, ameliorate the effects of maltreatment, and alter the conditions that create the risk of child maltreatment.

Child Welfare:
Child welfare services are part of the human services and social welfare programs oriented toward the protection, care and healthy development of children and youth, ages birth to 18 years of age or older if under court jurisdiction, and their families. Child welfare services refer to the following broad responsibilities within child protective and juvenile services:
➢ Identifying child maltreatment and safety threats, concerns affecting family functioning and community protection and implementing responses to address these concerns;

> ➤ Establishing and ensuring quality out-of-home placement for children in need of temporary out of home care, and;
>
> ➤ Consistent with state and federal laws and policy, assuring timely permanent placement of children and youth who are placed in temporary out-of-home care.

Concurrent Planning:

An approach to case planning which emphasizes the provision of reasonable efforts to reunify the family while simultaneously establishing an alternative plan for a permanent, safe and stable placement. Concurrent permanency planning is designed to expedite family reunification, when possible, because of its structured, focused and respectful involvement of parents and other family members early on in the planning process.

Culture: The integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communication styles, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.

Cultural Competence:

A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, practices, and policies that are formed within a system, within an agency, and among professionals that enable the system, agency, and professionals to work respectfully, effectively and responsibly in culturally diverse situations.

Delinquent: A youth who is 10 years of age or older who has violated any state or federal criminal law, except as provided in Chapter 938.

Domestic Violence:

An incident or pattern of assaultive and coercive behavior that may include physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that a person uses against their significant others.

Family: A group of two or more individuals who share a common life experience and form connections with one another and defines itself as a family. Family may include a child and his or her biological, adoptive, or temporary foster parents, plus siblings, extended family, significant others and any other blood and in-law relatives as defined by the family.

Investigation (CPS):

A component of the CPS process that involves information gathering and analysis to ensure child safety, assess the risk of maltreatment and need for services, and determine whether or not maltreatment has occurred or is likely to occur. It may also include a determination of the maltreater. The investigation process is regulated by the Chapter 48 and by CPS Investigations Standards.

Intake (CPS):

A component of the CPS casework process that involves the identification of possible child maltreatment and initiates the investigation to ensure child safety by determining the immediacy with which an investigation must be initiated.

Juvenile Court Intake:

Specialized services, authorized under Chapters 48 and 938, which include, but are not limited to, assessment and decision-making regarding physical custody, provision of crisis intervention services and provision of court referrals and recommendations to address the current needs of the child/juvenile and his/her family.

Juvenile Services:

Specialized services, provided to youth, juveniles in need of protection and services and delinquent youth, and their families under which the safety and protection of the juvenile, his/her family, and the community (including victims) are the primary focus in addressing current issues and concerns.

Kinship Care Program:

Specialized program which provides financial support to eligible relative caretakers who have relative children placed with them under a voluntary arrangement with the child's parent(s) or under court-order; eligible kinship care relatives include a stepparent, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, first cousin, nephew, niece, aunt, uncle

or any person of a preceding generation as denoted by the prefix of grand, great or great-great. The Kinship Care Program is funded using federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) monies.

Ongoing Services:

A component of the CPS and Juvenile Justice process that involves the active coordination and monitoring of assistance provided to children or youth and their families. Ongoing case management responsibilities include all functions of the CPS and/or Juvenile Justice assessment of needs and concerns, development and implementation of case plans, service coordination, evaluation of child, youth and family progress, and case closure. These casework responsibilities support the appropriate use of services, out-of-home care placements and mandates associated with court involvement.

Out-of-Home Care Placement:

Care provided by licensed providers to a child removed from his or her parental home. Placements can be made with a relative, foster home, treatment foster home, shelter care, group home, or child caring institution (residential care center); licensed out-of-home care placements include the following:
➢ Foster home means any facility that is operated by a person required to be licensed to provide temporary care and maintenance for no more than 4 children or youth or, if necessary to enable a sibling group to remain together, for no more than 6 children or youth.
➢ Group home means a licensed facility providing for the temporary 24-hour residential care for 5 to 8 children or youth.
➢ Child caring institution, or residential care center, means a licensed facility operated by a child welfare agency for the temporary care and maintenance of children or youth residing in that facility.

Out-of-Home Care Placement Outcomes:

Specific indicators regarding the experiences of children and youth who are or were in licensed out-of-home care.
➢ *Re-entry* refers to the placement of a child or youth in out-of-home care subsequent to a previous placement that was terminated due to a return to the family or to relative placement.
➢ *Placement stability* refers to the number of placements within a single of episode in out-of-home care.
➢ *Length of Stay* refers to the duration of a placement episode prior to closure.

Permanency Plan:

A specific plan designed to assure that a child placed outside of his or her home, required under Chapters 48 and 938, is reunified with his or her family whenever appropriate or that the child quickly attains a placement or home providing long-term stability.

Permanency Goals:

The desired living situation by which a child or juvenile in out-of-home care will be ensured a safe and permanent home; for purposes of this assessment, permanency outcomes are based on the data collected by the DCFS and are labeled in the assessment tool and data profiles as follows:
➢ Reunification or Returned Home
➢ Relative Placement
➢ Adoption (Relative, Foster Home Conversion, or Other Nonrelative)
➢ Other- Closures due to Age of Majority, Independent Living, Transfer to DHFS/Other State Institutions or Other Facility, Death, and Runaway Status.

Relative: For general child welfare purposes, relative means a parent, grandparent, stepparent, brother, sister, first cousin, nephew, niece, uncle or aunt whose relationship to the child is by blood, marriage or adoption.

Risk: The likelihood that child maltreatment will occur.

Safety: The present security of a child and the absence of conditions that are likely to result in severe harm to the child in the immediate future; security is evaluated based on the controllability of the child/family situation, the immediacy of the concern(s), and the severity of the results or potential of the maltreatment.

Safety Assessment:

A component of the CPS casework process that focuses on the identification of family dynamics and conditions that are threats to a child's safety.

Safety Plan: Resulting from a safety assessment, a safety plan is a specific approach developed by the ongoing case manager and the family to control the family dynamics and conditions which place a child in imminent danger of serious physical/emotional harm. Safety plans can be in-home plans (child remains in the home) or out-of-home plans (child is removed from the home) either voluntarily or under court order.

Specialized Services:

The term services is used to describe resources, formal/professional and informal/community-based, which are available to local children and families who are or have been served by the child welfare agency. Services dedicated to these efforts presented in the assessment include:

➢ Safety services are intended for the sole purpose of controlling for child safety; safety services differ from treatment services in that they are short-term and used strictly to control for the immediate safety and well-being of the child.

➢ Reunification Services are intended to prepare children in out-of-home care and parents for the safe return of children to their homes and to sustain successful reunification of families.

Substantiation:

A determination that an allegation of child maltreatment has occurred as supported by a preponderance of the evidence.

Title IV-E:

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act governs and authorizes funds for state child welfare programs to carry out their responsibilities associated with children placed in out-of-home care. As part of the receipt of such funds, state child welfare programs and their agents must comply with Title IV-E requirements and ensure that specific judicial determinations are made at certain points in the case process.

Title IV-E Judicial Determinations:

These are called judicial to prevent a child's removal from his or her home and to support a safe return of the child to his or her home as quickly as possible or to obtain another alternative to ensure a permanent home for the child.

As part of this assessment, the local practices associated with the following judicial determinations are to be included:

➢ *Contrary to the Child's Welfare* refers to the determination that remaining in the home would not be in the child's welfare, safety or best interests.

➢ *Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal* refers to the determination that the agency made reasonable efforts to prevent the child's removal from his/her home or that such efforts were not required consistent with state and federal law.

➢ *Reasonable Efforts to Finalize the Permanency Plan* refers to the determination that the agency is making or has made reasonable efforts to carry out the child's permanency plan and assist the family in achieving the identified permanency goal.

LOCAL ASSESSMENT COVER SHEET

*Please complete the following information for your county's local assessment process and submit to Michelle Rawlings (FAX- (608)266-6836 or e-mail- rawlimm@dhfs.state.wi.us) by **April 6, 2001**.*

County Name:	

Leadership Team Members		
Name	**Agency**	**Title**

Lead County Staff Person	Name:	
	Address:	
	Phone:	Fax:
	E-mail Address:	

Data Contact Person	Name:	
	Address:	
	Phone:	Fax:
	E-mail Address:	

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY OVERVIEW

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

Please provide information about agency operations, staffing, caseload, practice, and provider network in the following areas:

Operational Information
Departmental Structure
1. Please describe or attach a current organizational chart that presents the program areas within the department.

Response:

2. Please describe the current responsibilities for each of the program areas within the department.

Response:

Child and Family Service Program Area(s)
1. For those program areas that carry out child welfare-related functions (i.e. child protective services, child and family services, and/or juvenile services, please indicate the current number of staff within each program area(s) staffing by type of position.

Position	*Child Protective Services*	*Juvenile Services*	*Other Child Welfare* *Please Describe:*	*Total*
Administrative				
Supervisory				
Professional/Direct Service				
Paraprofessional/Case Aide				
Clerical				
Subtotal				

2. Please describe any hiring requirements, i.e. education, experience the agency has for the administrative, supervisory, professional and paraprofessional positions listed above.

Response:

3. Please describe or attach any written policy or other formal documentation presenting the agency's current expectations for child welfare staff training and professional development.

Response:

4. Indicate for each of the following program areas, the agency's current use of contracted services for child welfare-related service provision.
   *Please check (v) either **None**, **Partial** or **Full** for each of the following program areas:*

	CPS Intake	*CPS Investigations*	*Juvenile Court Intake*	*CPS Ongoing Services* *(Case Management)*	*Juvenile Ongoing Services*	*Paraprofessional/ Case Aide Services*	*Foster Care Coordination* *(Recruitment, Licensing and Relicensing)*	*Other* *(Please Specify)*
None *(County Staff Only)*								
Partial								
Full *(Private Agency Staff Only)*								

5. Child Protective and Juvenile Service Expenditures and Funding Source Information for a One Calendar Year Period
   Check one and provide respective information as follows:
   Calendar Year 1999 [   ]   **OR**   **Calendar Year 2000** [   ]

Program Area	State/Federal Sources				Local Sources			*Total*
	Community Aids	*Youth Aids*	*TANF*	*Other State Allocations* *(Safe/Stable, IV-E Incentive, etc.)*	*Required Match*	*Over Match*	*Other County Funds & 3rd Party Payments*	
Child Protective Services								
Administration								
Services								
OOHC Placement Costs								
Juvenile Services								
Administration								
Services								
OOHC Placement Costs								
Correctional Placement Costs								
Other:_____								
TOTAL BY FUNDING SOURCE								

6. Does the agency currently have Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) or formal written agreements with the following organizations? *Please check (v) for **Yes** or **No** for each of the following groups:*

Provider/Organization	Yes	No	Describe and attached MOU/Agreement if Currently in Place:
Law Enforcement *			
Children's/Juvenile Court			
School/School District(s)			
Hospitals/Health Care Providers			
Other:			

*As required by Chapter 48, s. 48.981 (3) (a), Stats. and by DHFS CPS Investigation Standards (1/26/2000)

Caseload Information

1. Please provide estimates for the open ongoing caseloads as of March, 2001 for the following areas:
   ***Case Definition for Caseload County** (Select One)*   ___ *By Child*   **OR**   ___ *By Family*

Case Type	Child Protective Services (Service to address Abuse/Neglect related concerns)	Family/Child Service (Service to address non-CPS concern)	Juvenile In Need of Protection/Services (Service to address status offense/adolescent behavioral concerns)	Delinquency
Voluntary				
Court-Ordered				

2. Discuss or attach any written information that describes the use of caseload ratios and any current approaches the agency takes to manage and/or distribute workload, i.e. caseload specialization, caseload weighting, case teaming, etc.

Response:

Agency Specific Practice - Intake/Investigation, Ongoing Case Management, and Out-of-Home Care Services

Intake/Investigation

Child Protective Services

Intake

Does the agency have any policies or procedures that support screening decisions for child maltreatment reports to the agency?

Response:

What are the primary reasons for screening-out a child abuse or neglect report to the agency?

Response:

Risk Assessment

1. Discuss the process currently used by the agency to identify and document formal risk assessment as part of a CPS Investigation.
   If a formal tool is used, please attach a copy.

Response:

2. How are the results of this risk assessment currently used to determine agency intervention with families?

Response:

Safety Assessment

1. Discuss the process currently used by the agency to identify and document factors that threaten a child's immediate safety at each of the following CPS decision-making points:
   ➤ Intake;
   ➤ Investigation;
   ➤ Completion of the Investigation.
   If a formal tool is used, please attach a copy.

Response:

2. How are the results of this safety assessment used to identify the type and level of intervention needed to ensure child safety?

Response:

Juvenile Services

1. Discuss the process currently used by the agency to assess youth behavior and impact on the impact his/her behavior has on community safety as part of a Juvenile Court Intake/Screening. *If a formal tool is used, please attach a copy.*

Response:

2. How are the results of this assessment/screening used to determine the type and extent of agency intervention with identified youth and their families and to ensure community safety?

Response:

Ongoing Services

Case Planning and Evaluation (CPS and Juvenile Services)

1. Discuss the process currently used by the agency to engage the family and to assess and document ongoing service needs for continuing intervention with children, youth, and their families and to ensure community safety. *If formal tools are used, please attach copies.*

> *Response:*

2. How are the results of the needs assessment currently used to develop a case plan directing intervention with children and/or juveniles and their families?

> *Response:*

3. In what ways are children and/or juveniles and their families currently involved in the identification of need and the development of a case plan to address those needs?

> *Response:*

4. In what ways are children and/or juveniles and their families currently involved in measuring or evaluating case progress toward addressing those needs or concerns?

> *Response:*

5. When a child or juvenile is in placement, what factors affect the frequency and type of visitation between children in out-of-home care and their parents? Between children in care and their siblings?

> *Response:*

Out-of-Home Care Services

Kinship and Relative Care

1. Discuss the agency's current use of relatives as out-of-home care providers to serve as a temporary or permanent out-of-home care placements.

> *Response:*

2. When a relative caregiver is used as a long-term placement, how does the agency typically support the child's permanency with the relative, e.g., use of kinship care, foster home licensure, guardianship, finalized adoption, or other arrangement?

> *Response:*

Out-of-Home Care Providers

1. Describe the agency's current policies and procedures for foster parent recruitment, ongoing support and retention.

Response:

2. Describe the agency's current policies and procedures for initial and ongoing training and training requirements, e.g., amount and type of training.

Response:

3. Current Estimate of the Number of Foster Parents and Licensed Capacity based on Child's Age, Gender, and Need for Sibling Group Placement

Placement Category	*Child's Age (Years)*					*Child's Gender*		*Emergency Placements*		*Sibling Groups*
	0-4	*5-11*	*12-14*	*15+*	*All Ages*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Receiving Homes*	*Shelter Care*	
Number of Foster Families									█	
Number of Licensed Slots										█

3. Describe any methods/approaches or other expectations the agency has for evaluating the effectiveness and/or quality of foster care and residential care providers?

Response:

Placement Selection and Matching

1. Discuss the current placement selection and matching process and list the participants used to identify a placement provider for a child/juvenile in need of out-of-home care.

Response:

2. Describe any variations to the above process for placement needs associated with CPS cases, Juvenile Services cases or voluntary cases.

Response:

3. Describe any variations to the above process for difference placement situations, i.e. emergency placements vs. planned placements, short-term placements vs. long-term placements.

Response:

4. Does the how the agency's placement selection and matching process described above include consideration of the family/agency specific factors?

*Please check (v) either **No** or **Yes** for each of the following factors:*

Factor	No	Yes	If **Yes**, how is consideration ensured- policy, written referral information/ worker preference, provider availability, and/or other methods of consideration?
Proximity to Family			
School Continuity			
Special Needs (Developmental, Physical, Emotional) of Child			
Sibling Groups			
Teen Parents			
Permanency Plan Goal			

5. What types of children and youth does the agency typically place outside of the county?

Response:

Child Protective Services Quality Assurance Information

1. Indicate whether or not the following approaches to assuring practice consistency, quality, and timeliness are currently used within your agency at the following points of case responsibility. *Select "Staff Only" in those situations when neither consultation with nor approval from a supervisor is required by the agency.*

Case Responsibility	*Staff Only*	*Supervisory Consult*	*Supervisory Approval*	**Written Policy/Procedures** *(If Yes ® Date of Most Recent Update)* **NOTE: It is not necessary to submit copies of current Policy or Procedures**
For All Cases at Intake				
Receiving Intake				
Conducting Records Check				
Screening Reports				
Determining Urgency				
For All Cases at Investigation				
Initiating Face to Face Contact				
Contacting Mandated Reporter				
Conducting Risk Assessment				
Conducting Safety Assessment				
Developing & Implementing Safety Plan				
Use of In-Home Safety Services				
Use of Out-of-Home Care/Child Removal				
Initiating Court Involvement				
Making Case Finding or Substantiation Decision(s)				
Completing the Investigation				
Opening for Ongoing Services				
For All Cases at Afterhours				
Receiving Intake				
Initiating Contact				
Assessing Child Safety				
Ensuring Child Safety				
Use of In-Home Safety Services				
Use of Out-of-Home Care/Child Removal				

Case Responsibility	Staff Only	Supervisory Consult	Supervisory Approval	Written Policy/Procedures (If Yes → Date of Most Recent Update)
For All Cases to Ongoing Services				
Transferring to Ongoing Services				
Assessing Service Needs				
Developing and Implementing Service Plan				
Evaluating Service Plan				
Reassessing Child Safety during Ongoing Services				
For Court Involved Cases				
Initiating Court Involvement				
Developing Court Recommendations- Conditions of and Services for Return				
For Child in Placement				
Identifying Potential Relative Placement Providers				
Selecting Placement Provider				
Selecting Higher Level Care- Group Home/Residential Care Center (CCI)				
Changing Placements				
Maintaining Child/Family Visitation				
Within 60 Days of Removal-				
Establishing Permanency Plan				
Beyond 6 Months from Removal-				
Conducting Administrative/Judicial Review of Permanency Plan				
No Later than 9 Months from Removal-				
Initiating Concurrent Planning Efforts with Family				
Beyond 12 Months from Removal-				
Conducting Administrative/Judicial Review of Permanency Plan				
Beyond 15 Months from Removal or in cases where care exceeds 15 of 22 Consecutive Months-				
Filing TPR or Documenting Exceptions for Filing TPR (ASFA)				
For All Cases				
Closing Services				

2. Discuss any other methods, approaches or data collection currently used by the agency to assure the consistency, quality and timeliness of its service delivery and case practice.

Response:

TARGETED PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Section Overview

Presented below are questions designed to promote cross-system discussion and understanding of specific aspects of local child welfare practice, the delivery system, and the unique resources and residents in each county.   The questions are grouped by three of the four outcome areas associated with this assessment- Safety, Out-of-Home Care and Permanency. Each question within the three outcome areas requires consultation or discussion with other agency representatives to develop a response. This response is to be based on a joint review of the data (as provided by the DCFS and any other local sources) and discussion between staff designated by the agency with the suggested representatives identified at the beginning of each outcome area.

Assessment Questions Requiring Scores

The questions listed below include both open-ended, narrative response type questions and more close-ended, scoring type questions. For the close-ended scoring questions, there are six tables addressing specific factors that may have been identified to have an impact on one or more of the areas under examination in the assessment. Please assign a score to each of the factors in a table as follows:

SCORE and ASSIGNED VALUES			
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Very Significant Effect/Impact	*Significant Effect/Impact*	*Some Effect/Impact*	*No Effect/Impact*

County Comparison Information

In addition, some questions suggest the use of county data and state-level data comparisons. In order to better understand approaches to and appropriate comparisons across counties, please complete the following table:

Comparison Counties Selected (Identify by County Name)	*Reasons for Selecting County as Comparable* *Please Check (v) all that Apply*						
	Total Population	*Child Population*	*Racial Composition*	*Economic Factors* (Poverty Rate, Income, Other)	*Geographic Proximity*	*Practice and Service Delivery Similarities*	*Other:* Please Describe

Safety
(CPS and Juvenile Service Related Questions)

Stakeholders: Law Enforcement, District Attorney and/or Corporation Counsel, and Juvenile Court Intake Worker (if court-attached)

Child Protective Service Considerations

Relevant Data Profile Sources: *Child Abuse and Neglect Data Tables*, *Demographic Data Table* - Juvenile Services Data, *Children's and Juvenile Court Data*

1. Discuss the timeframes by which the county agency establishes face-to-face contact and completes an investigation and the impact these factors have on child abuse and neglect decision-making, child removals, and service provision.

Response:

2. Identify and discuss any variations between the county's substantiation rate in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

3. Score each of the following factors based on the effect or impact it has on substantiation decision-making:

Score *(Scoring Criteria on Page 19)*	*Factors Impacting Substantiation Decision-Making*
	Number of Reports Received
	Source of Report
	Type of Maltreatment Reports
	Type of Maltreater by Caregiver Type
	Agency Intake/Report Screening Practice
	Agency Risk or Safety Assessment Practice
	Substantiation Appeal Hearings
	Caregiver Background Laws and Requirements
	Resource Availability
	Legal Discretion/Standards of Proof
	Other- Please Specify:

4. For those factors rated a **1** or a **2**, please describe the rationale for assigning the factor(s) with such significance:

Response:

Juvenile Service Considerations

1. Identify and discuss any variations between the county's juvenile arrest rates and delinquency adjudication in comparison to similar counties and to the state data.

Response:

2. Score each of the following factors based on the effect or impact it has on entry into the county's juvenile services caseload:

Score *(Scoring Criteria on Page 19)*	*Factors Impacting Juvenile Services Population*
	Number of Referrals to Agency
	Arrests by Type of Crime- Violent, Non-Violent, Drug, Municipal
	Juvenile Intake Screening Practice
	Resource Availability
	Legal Discretion/Standards of Proof
	Other- *Please Specify:*

3. For those factors rated a **1** or a **2**, please describe the rationale for assigning the factor(s) with such significance:

Response:

Out-of-Home Care
(CPS and Juvenile Services Combined)

Stakeholders: Foster Parent(s), District Attorney and/or Corporation Counsel, Judge/Court Commissioner

Child Removal and Judicial Determinations

Describe how, when and by whom the following Title IV- E Judicial Determinations are being made when children and juveniles when then enter and remain in out-of-home care:

Judicial Determination	*How* *(Hearing Type, Waiver, Other)*	*When* *(Number of Days after Removal/ TPC Date)*	*By Whom* *(Judge, Court Commissioner, Other)*
Contrary to the Child's Welfare			
Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal			
Reasonable Efforts to Finalize the Permanency Plan			
Annual Review of Permanency Plan			

Length of Stay
Length of stay refers to the length of time a child is in out-of-home care.

Relevant Data Sources: *Out-of-Home Care 1999 Report-* Length of Stay in Care Table

1. Identify and discuss variations in the county's rates of length of stay in out-of-home care in comparison to other counties and to the state average.

Response:

2. Score each of the following factors based on the effect or impact it has on the county's length of stay in care rates:

Score *(Scoring Criteria on Page 19)*	*Factors Impacting Length of Stay in Out-of-Home Care*
	Composition of Out-of-Home Care Caseload (CPS, JIPS, Delinquency, Other)
	Community-Based Resource Availability- i.e. In-Home Safety, Reunification, Etc.
	Placement Resource Availability
	Placement Provider Support and Education
	Characteristics/Special Needs of Family/Child
	Agency Case Planning and Evaluation Practices

	Agency Permanency Planning Practices
	Legal Discretion/Expectations
	Other- *Please Specify:*

3. For those factors rated a **1** or a **2**, please describe the rationale for assigning the factor(s) with such significance:

Response:

Placement Stability

Relevant Data Profile Source: *Federal Child Welfare Outcomes 1997-1999-* Outcome 7

1. Identify and discuss any variations between the county's placement stability in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

2. Score each of the following factors the based on the effect or impact it has the county's placement stability for children and youth during their stay in out-of-home care.

Score *(Scoring Criteria on Page 19)*	*Factors Impacting Placement Stability*
	Composition of Out-of-Home Care Caseload (CPS, JIPS, Delinquency, Other)
	Community-Based Resource Availability
	Placement Resource Availability
	Placement Provider Knowledge and Skill
	Characteristics/Special Needs of Children/Youth
	Agency Case Planning and Evaluation Practice
	Agency Permanency Planning Practice
	Child's Integration to Placement Community, i.e. school, neighborhood, health care, etc.
	Other- *Please Specify:*

3. For those factors rated a **1** or a **2**, please describe the rationale for assigning the factor(s) with such significance:

Response:

Re-Entry into Care

Relevant Data Profile Sources: *Out-of-Home Care 1999 Report-* Time Until Re-Entry into Care Table, *Federal Child Welfare Outcomes 1997-1999-* Outcome 4B

1. Identify and discuss any variations between the county's rate of re-entry into out-of-home care in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

2. What populations of children and youth in care have the highest re-entry rates and what can be done to reduce re-entry rates among these groups?

Response:

3. Score each of the following factors based on the effect or impact it has on the county's re-entry of children and youth into out-of-home care.

Score *(Scoring Criteria on Page 19)*	*Factors Impacting Re-Entry into Care*
	Composition of Out-of-Home Care Caseload (CPS, JIPS, Delinquency, Other)
	Community-Based Resource Availability
	Community-Based Resource Accessibility
	Characteristics/Special Needs of Children/Youth
	Agency Intake/Investigation Practice
	Agency Case Planning and Evaluation Practice
	Legal Discretion/Expectations
	Ongoing Family Reunification Needs- i.e. support network, resource availability, school, health care, etc.
	Other- *Please Specify:*

4. For those factors rated a **1** or a **2**, please describe the rationale for assigning the factor(s) with such significance:

Response:

Voluntary Placements

Relevant Data Sources: *Out-of-Home Care 1999 Report,* Composition of Caseload

1. How are voluntary placements in out-of-home care used as a service for children and families in the child welfare system?

Response:

2. In what types of situations are voluntary placements likely to be used, e.g. developmentally disabled/special needs children, emergency medical situations, other?

Response:

3. What process is used with families to determine if voluntary placements will continue under court order?

Response:

Transitions to Adulthood

1. What mechanisms are used to assist youth with special needs to continue receiving services when they reach the age of majority?

Response:

2. Describe how the independent living skills of youth are assessed and how skill deficiencies are addressed.

Response:

PERMANENCY
(CPS and Juvenile Services)

Stakeholders: Judge/Court Commissioner, District Attorney and/or Corporation Council, and State Adoption Consultant (DCFS, Bureau of Programs & Policies

Court System Information

1. Please describe how the following parties participate in the development and approval of permanency plans:
   - Judges/Family Court Commissioners:

Response:

   - District Attorneys/Assistants:

Response:

   - Corporation Counsels:

Response:

   - Guardians ad Litem (GAL):

Response:

   - Public Defenders:

Response:

   - Clerks of Court/Court Administrators:

Response:

   - Public Defenders:

Response:

   - Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs):

Response:

- Other Court Professionals (Describe):

Response:

5. Describe the court-related practice or policies and procedures currently used in the county for the child welfare program in the following areas.
   - Court Involvement in Child Protective Service and/or Juvenile Court Intake:

Response:

   - Children's/Juvenile Court Rotation Schedules for Judges and Assistant District Attorney(s):

Response:

   - GAL Process, including Appointment, Compensation, Training, Performance Evaluation, and Arrangements to Meet with the Child:

Response:

   - Appointment of Counsel for Parents:

Response:

   - Permanency Plan Reviews: Administrative Review and/or Judicial Reviews:

Response:

   - Court Involvement in Advisory Boards/Planning Committees:

Response:

   - Records/Information Exchange among Agencies:

Response:

Permanency Outcomes

Relevant Data Profile Sources: *Federal Child Welfare Outcomes 1997-1999,* Outcome Tables 3A, 3C, 3D, 3E and E (2), 5A & 5B

1. Identify and discuss any variations between the county's permanency outcomes (i.e. percent of case exits due to reunification, adoption and other exits) in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

2. Identify and discuss any variations between the county's time frame for exits through reunification with parents or relatives in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

3. Identify and discuss any variations between time frame for exits through adoption in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

4. Identify and discuss any variations between the extent of other permanency outcomes (aging out, independent living, transfer to state institutions, runaway, or death) for the county in comparison to similar counties and to the state average.

Response:

Permanency Planning

1. Describe the process used to ensure that permanency plans for children and youth are finalized within one year of their entry into out-of-home care.

Response:

2. Describe how case plans and case evaluations of child and family progress are used in establishing and updating permanency goals.

Response:

3. Describe how direction from the court in reviewing and approving permanency plans is incorporated into the agency's permanency plan process.

Response:

4. Describe what differences, if any, exist between the permanency planning process and court role for protective service cases and permanency planning and court role for juvenile justice cases.

Response:

5. In cases where the agency is doing concurrent planning, how are court staff involved in the concurrent planning process?

> *Response:*

Termination of Parental Rights

Relevant Data Sources: *Children's and Juvenile Court Data*

1. ASFA requires the child welfare agency to pursue TPR for children and juveniles who have been in out-of-home care for 15 months, unless certain exceptions apply.

    What process does the agency have in place to comply with the TPR requirement, including how TPR is considered for individual children and youth and the decision-making process to make exceptions to the TPR requirement. *Attach an example of the documentation completed and maintained by the agency in the child's/juvenile's case record documenting this analysis and decision-making.*

> *Response:*

2. For those cases where the agency recommends pursuing TPR, what process is used in the county use to handle TPR requests and subsequently file TPR petitions with the court? How do the individuals involved work jointly on TPR requests and petitions?

> *Response:*

3. Please describe what steps are taken by county attorneys and the court to process TPR requests from the agency and file TPR petitions in a timely manner to meet the ASFA requirement.   What means are used to resolve issues regarding the pursuit of specific TPR requests?

> *Response:*

4. For what reasons have TPR requests from the agency not been pursued as TPR petitions with the court? For what reasons have TPR petitions filed with the court not been approved?   What can be done to improve the ratio of TPR requests by the agency which are ultimately approved by the court?

> *Response:*

5. Within the county, is there currently a backlog of TPR requests pending with the court? If so, how many requests are pending and what steps are being taken to address the backlog?

> *Response:*

6. Score each of the following factors based on the impact they have on pursuing the termination of parental rights once the agency has decided to pursue TPR for the child.

Score (Scoring Criteria on Page 19)	Factors Impacting Pursuit of Termination of Parental Rights
	Meeting Reasonable Efforts Standards or Benchmarks
	Community-Based Resource or Service Availability
	Identification/Location of Birth Parents
	Meeting Timeframes for TPR Warnings
	Values/Beliefs Regarding TPR
	Availability and/or Knowledge of Adoptive Homes
	Agency Operations- Case Planning and Evaluation Practice
	Court System Operations- Scheduling, Noticing, Other
	The Child's Preference Regarding TPR
	Other- *Please Specify:*

7. For those factors rated a **1** or a **2**, please describe the rationale for assigning the factor(s) with such significance:

Response:

Guardianship

1. In what situations is legal guardianship an appropriate permanency outcome?

Response:

2. What can be done to encourage the use of legal guardianship?

Response:

Adoption

1. In what ways can the state adoption program assist the county agency in a consultation role for those children with a permanency goal of adoption?

Response:

2. What factors are considered in reaching conclusions about the likelihood of adoption for children? How is the availability of adoptive resources outside the county taken into account in making decisions whether to pursue adoption?

Response:

COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

SAFETY

Key Stakeholders: County Board Representative, School Personnel, Health/Mental Health Care and AODA Providers, Safe & Stable Families Committee Member, In-Home/Safety Service Providers, Parents/Youth/Child Client

Relevant Data Sources: *1999 Child Abuse and Neglect Data*, *Out-of-Home Care 1999 Report-* Entries, Exits and Total Caseload and Caseload Composition Tables, *Demographic Data Table-* Juvenile Services Data

Child Maltreatment Reports
1. What factors affect the number and type of abuse and neglect reports in the county?

Response:

2. How does the number and type of reports compare with other counties?

Response:

Safety Services- In-Home
What types of situations result in the provision of in-home safety services being provided to the family?

Response:

1. What types of safety services are available in the community?

Response:

2. When are safety services voluntary versus court ordered?

Response:

Safety Services- Child Removal to Out-of-Home Care
1. What types of situations result in removals of children from the home in order to ensure their safety?

Response:

2. How does the number of removals (entries into out-of-home care) compare with other counties?

Response:

3. What processes or procedures are in place to prevent unnecessary removals of children from the home?

Response:

4. Following child removals from their families, what can be done to engage parents in services to reunify their families?

Response:

Service Coordination
1. How are community agencies (schools, service providers, advocates, etc.) involved in ensuring child safety for families served in the child welfare system?

Response:

2. How are families with children who are identified to be at risk of abuse and neglect or whose immediate safety is endangered given priority for community services with available service providers?

Response:

Community Safety
1. What type of assessment or other process is used to determine whether youth are a threat to community safety?

Response:

2. How are the youth assessment results used in deciding what form of rehabilitation, treatment and/or community or victim compensation is necessary?

Response:

Community Awareness
Discuss strategies to make the community aware of safety issues and the availability of service to ensure child safety with families.

Response:

OUT-OF-HOME CARE OUTCOMES

Key Stakeholders: County Board Representative, Foster Parent, Group/Residential Care Provider, Permanency Plan Review Board Member, CASA Volunteer, Safe & Stable Families Committee Member, Health/Mental Health Care and AODA Provider, Parents/Youth Client

Relevant Data Sources: *Out-of-Home Care 1999 Report Table & Children's and Juvenile Court Data*

Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment and Retention

1. Discuss strategies to recruit and retain persons to be foster and adoptive parents.

Response:

2. Are there certain types of children for whom foster/adoptive parents are most difficult to find, and if so, what can be done to improve recruitment of these foster/adoptive homes for these children?

Response:

3. What types of training and support are available to foster and adoptive parents in the county?

Response:

4. In what ways do limitations on the training and support available negatively affect the agency's ability to retain and support foster parents?

Response:

Available Placement Resources

1. Are sufficient placement resources available to ensure that children are placed in situations that meet their individual needs?

Response:

2. What types of placement resources are lacking for which types of children/youth? What can be done to increase the available placement resources for these children/youth?

Response:

Protective Service Placements

1. How does the agency select the initial placement provider when a child or youth is in need of temporary out-of-home care?

Response:

2. Are shelter care or receiving homes available and routinely used as temporary placements?

Response:

Juvenile Service Placements

1. What criteria are used in determining the level (i.e., foster care, treatment foster care, group home, etc.) of placement for youth status offenders and delinquents?

Response:

2. How do placement decisions balance the need for community safety with the best interests of the child?

Response:

Placement Selection Considerations

Federal law requires that children removed from the home be placed with siblings and in proximity to family and schools to the extent possible. How do these considerations affect placement selection?

Response:

Independent Living

Research shows that foster parents play a critical role in helping youth acquire the skills needed to live independently upon reaching age 18. How can foster parents be involved in teaching youth independent living skills?

Response:

Are training and supports available to assist foster parents in teaching independent living skills?

Response:

PERMANENCY OUTCOMES

Key Stakeholders: County Board Representative, Permanency Planning Review Board Member, Health/Mental Health Care and AODA Providers, Reunification Service Provider, Kinship Care Provider, Foster Parent, Safe & Stable Committee Member, State Adoption Consultant (BPP), Parents/Youth Client

Relevant Data Sources: *Kinship Data*, *Out-of-Home Care 1999 Report Tables*, *Federal Child Welfare Outcomes 1997-1999-* Outcomes 3A-3E (2), 4A, 5A & 5B, & *Children's and Juvenile Court Data*

Permanency Planning for Protective Service Cases
1. Discuss community expectations regarding permanency planning for children removed due to safety issues, including what barriers exist to reunification.

Response:

2. Discuss what factors or circumstances affect when other permanency options are considered and pursued for children.

Response:

Permanency Planning for Juvenile Service Cases
Discuss community expectations regarding permanency planning for juvenile status offenders and delinquents, including how objectives for behavior control are established and what conditions are placed on youth in order to return home.

Response:

Reunification Services (CPS and Juvenile Services)
1. What types of services are most effective at facilitating reunification of children and youth with their families?

Response:

2. What kinds of support do families need following reunification? Which of these supports are available to local families?

Response:

3. How can families build family and community support structures to assist during times of family crisis?

Response:

Use of Relatives

1. Discuss community expectations regarding the use of relatives as out-of-home care providers.

Response:

2. Are relatives used on both an informal and formal (court-ordered) basis?

Response:

3. How are relatives made aware of their potential to become licensed as foster parents, legal guardians or adoptive parents? How are they supported in exploring any of the above opportunities?

Response:

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)

Except under specific circumstances, federal law (Adoption and Safe Families Act) requires a petition for TPR to be filed for children who have been in out-of-home care for 15 months of the most recent 22 months.

1. Under what circumstances is TPR not in the best interest of children who will remain in care for long periods?

Response:

2. What barriers exist in the community to pursuing TPR for those cases where it is appropriate?

Response:

CHILD & FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

Key Stakeholders: Foster Parent, School Personnel, Community-Based Service Provider (Neighborhood Center, Family Resource Center, Parenting Support Group, etc.), Health Care Provider, Treatment Service Provider (Mental Health, AODA), Public Health Representative, Developmental Disabilities Representative, Domestic Violence Representative, Guardian Ad Litem, Parents/Child Client

Family/Child Involvement in Service Planning

1. How are children (as age appropriate), youth and families made aware of the service process, expectations and consequences when served within the child welfare system?

Response:

2. How can families participate in identifying service needs, selecting service providers, evaluating the quality of services and determining progress?

Response:

3. How can youth participate in identifying service needs, selecting service providers, evaluating the quality of services and determining progress?

Response:

4. What actions can be taken to preserve and support the connections between children and their families while the children are in out-of-home care?

Response:

Access to and Coordination of Services
What approaches exist to support the identification of service needs, referral to services, and service coordination between the child welfare system and other service providers in each of the following areas:
- Education including special education;
- Physical health including preventive care;
- Mental health treatment, and;
- Substance abuse treatment.

Response:

Community-Based Services

Community-based services refer to resources and supports - parenting assistance, respite care, clinical services, neighborhood networks, children/youth recreational activities, etc. - available to children and families, including those children, youth and families who are or were served by the child welfare agency, in local communities and neighborhoods.

What methods or approaches are used to support the use of community-based services for children and families, including both traditional and non-traditional types of services?

Response:

Cultural Competency

1. For children and families of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, how are service providers made aware of and are able to demonstrate understanding of cultural issues?

Response:

2. What actions can be taken to improve the competency of service providers to work with diverse populations?

Response:

Independent Living

Research shows that youth who age out of out-of-home care struggle to live independently as young adults.

1. How can these young adults be connected with community resources and/or the adult service system and develop family and community supports?

Response:

2. What safety nets exist, formally and informally, in the county to support this population of young adults?

Response:

LOCAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Program Initiatives/Modifications

Based on the results and discussion held as part of the assessment process, please describe up to three program planning initiatives and/or modifications the county will pursue, what partners will be involved and check the corresponding outcome area such efforts are to address:

Program Initiatives/Modifications	Outcome Area(s) to be Impacted Check v All That Apply			
	Safety	OOHC	Permanency	Well-Being

State Policy Implications

Based on the results and discussion held as part of the assessment process, please describe any state policy or legislative implications that could support quality service delivery and program outcomes and check the corresponding outcome area such efforts are to address:

Key Policy/Legislative Implications	Outcome Area(s) to be Impacted Check v All That Apply			
	Safety	OOHC	Permanency	Well-Being

Agency Training Implications

Based on the results and discussion held as part of the assessment process, please describe any training implications that could support quality service delivery and program outcomes and check the corresponding outcome area such efforts are to address:

Key Training Implications	Outcome Area(s) to be Impacted Check v All That Apply			
	Safety	OOHC	Permanency	Well-Being

LOCAL CHILD WELFARE APPROVAL SHEET

Please identify by name(s) and phone number(s) and indicate with a check (v) those Leadership Team members that have reviewed and approved of the agency response to the local assessment tool. The Leadership Team can submit comments about the assessment process.

Leadership Team Member	Name	Phone Number	Check if Reviewed & Approved
County Agency Director			
Judge/Court Commissioner			
District Attorney			
Corporation Counsel			
Other- Please Specify:			
Other-Please Specify:			
Other- Please Specify:			

Additional Comments from Leadership Team: